New Phase Expected in Viet War

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U.S. Official Says Reds May Stop Guerrilla Tactics

By Michael T. Malloy

SAIGON, Jan. 6 (UPI)—A United States military spokesman warned today that the war in South Viet-Nam appears to be entering a new and dangerous phase.

He said recent battles, captured documents and broadcasts by Hanoi Radio in North Viet-Nam indicated the Viet Cong had launched its long-dreaded experiment in fighting bigger and longer battles.

If true it would indicate the Viet Cong felt it had won its guerrilla war and now was strong enough to test the South Vietnamese in pitched battle, and attack and try to hold towns for days in what the Reds call a prelude to victory.

Four Battles Cited

The American spokesman cited four battles—An Lao, Soc Trang, Da Dua and Binh Gia — as examples of Communist willingness to stand and fight. He called the battle at Binh Gia, 40 miles south of Saigon, the biggest, longest, toughest and best-coordinated Communist campaign he could recall.

So far the Viet Cong tactics in South Viet-Nam have followed to the letter the famed primer on guerrilla warfare written by Mao Tse-tung and followed with precision also in Cuba, the Congo and Algeria.

Mao's primer calls first for the establishment of small groups of irregulars to carry out a "war of liberation." The policy is one of hit-and-run until the enemy is weak and the guerrillas are strong and well armed with captured weapons.

Second Phase Due

The second phase opens when the guerrillas are strong enough to fight pitched battles and even attack cities. Recent Hanoi broadcasts have referred to the "regular war" in the South.

The American spokesman said some of the Viet Cong units fighting in the South have become larger and more

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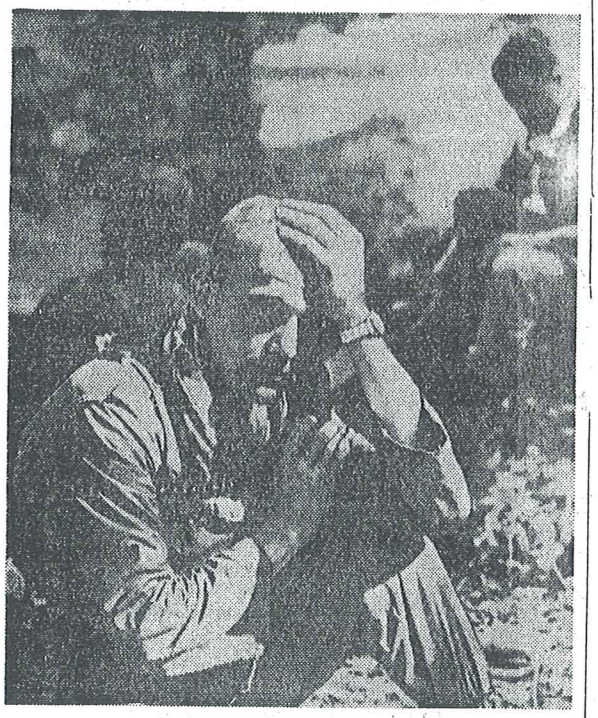
Thai Navy told to shoot back if fired on by Cambodian vessels in Thailand waters. Page A14.

Senators indicate uncertainty and caution in survey on Viet-Nam Policy. Page A14.

Hanoi claims U.S. ships shelled North Vietnamese village. Pentagon denies it. Page A14.



Associated Press

Army Sgt. Harold Lewis, 33, of Notus, Idaho, takes a brief rest along a road near Binh Gia, South Viet-Nam. Picture was made Monday after the ranger battalion Lewis was attached to had repulsed a Viet Cong ambush. An American sergeant and 11 Vietnamese soldiers were killed in the ambush attack.

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New Phase Predicted In Vietnamese War

heavily armed than the South Vietnamese units they face.

He estimated Viet Cong strength at somewhere between 28,000 and 34,000 men —enough to experiment with new tactics and learn whether they can face government units on an equal basis over a period of several days.

So far, he said, the fighting at Binh Gia has cost government forces 200 dead, 190 wounded and 65 missing against reports of 140 dead Communists. The battle still may not be over.

This drawn-out battle was the fourth which confirmed captured documents expressing Red hopes for escalating the civil war beyond the hit-and-run stage, according to the spokesman.

The spokesman said the Viet Cong forces around Binh Gia only recently had marched into surrounding Phuoc Tuy Province, a sparsely populated region of swams, rubber lantations and a few rice paddies.

"Evidence shows they probably intend to stay and contest the Province," he said. Thus far the struggle had been favorable for the enemy, but 3000 government troops still searched the area in hope of bringing the Communists to battle, he said.

A U.S. Army enlisted crewman was wounded by ground fire in Phuoc Tuy yesterday while flying in one of 30 helicopters carrying search troops. That search failed to uncover any guerrillar and only two were seen today. Both were captured, the first Communist prisoners taken since the campaign began on Dec. 28.

The spokesman said the Viet Cong obviously had moved a regimental headquarters into Phuoc Tuy Province where there were no Red troops before November. The Province is ideal for the guerrillas, he said, because of the jungle which covers their hiding places.

H said the Viet Cong also may hope to link Phuoc Tuy with the north Communist zones, completing a ring of rebel-held territory around Saigon.

He also said they might be trying to lure government troops out of the Hop Tac pacification program around Saigon. The American command pins most of its hopes for an eventual turn in the war on this program.

Vietnamese sources reported North Vietnamese political officers have been infiltrating into South Viet-Nam in recent months to assure continued Communist domination of the so-called "national liberation front."

U.S. Toll in Viet-Nam Put at 1173 in 1964

SAIGON, Jan. 6 (AP)—U.S. official sources announced today that American battle casualties in the South Vietnamese guerrilla war in 1964 totaled 1173, including 136 killed.

This compared with 615 casualties, including 107 killed, in the previous three years of American involvement.